

Message Text

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41

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-11 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00

INRE-00 USIE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 SAJ-01 SAB-01 SAM-01 ACDA-05

OMB-01 AF-06 DHA-02 OPR-02 SCCT-01 /094 W

----- 062732

O R 121550Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8085

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY NICOSIA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL STUTTGART

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USMISSION USUN NY

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

CINCUSNAVERU LONDON UK

COMMSIXTHFLT

CTF SIX ZERO

CTF SIX ONE

CTF SIX TWO

CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO

FOSIF ROTA SPAIN

FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA

DIA WASHDC

CIA WASHDC

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 0352

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, LE

SUBJ: AS SITUATION GOES FROM BAD TO WORSE, ALL EYES TURN
TO POSSIBLE FRANGIE-ASAD SUMMIT

REF: BEIRUT 00286 (1332Z)

1. SUMMARY: THERE HAS BEEN NO LET-UP IN THE BEIRUT FIGHT-
ING, AND CLASHES ARE NOW REPORTED FROM OTHER AREAS OF
LEBANON AS WELL. A FRANGIE-ASAD MEETING, POSSIBLY THIS
WEEK ON DAMASCUS, IS CONSIDERED A VIRTUAL CERTAINTY. THIS
IS SOURCE OF AN ALMOST DESPERATE OPTIMISM IN SOME CIRCLES.
END SUMMARY.

2. THERE WAS NO LULL IN FIGHTING OVER WEEKEND. INF ANYTHING.
SITUATION WORSENERD NOT ONLY IN BEIRUT BUT IN OTHER AREAS AS
WELL. FOCUS OF ATTENTION HAS BEEN SEIZURE OF AN ARMY CON-
VOY. JAN 11 BY PALESTINIANS AND LEFTISTS IN CHIAH AS IT PRE-
PARED TO TAKE PROVISIONS TO BESIEGED TEL ZAATAR CAMP. THE
DISPUTE AROSE OVER PALESTINIAN DEMANDS TO PROVIDE THEIR OWN
PROVISIONS FOR CAMPS, WHILE ARMY HAD ORDERS TO TAKE IN ONLY
ARMY-SUPPLIED PROVISIONS. (NOTE: PALESTINIANS APPARENTLY
MAKE DISTINCTION BETWEEN ARMY ESCORT FOR PALESTINIAN-
CONTROLLED TRUCKS, WHICH LAST WEEK THEY ACCEPTED BUT
CHRISTIAN RIGHTS REFUSED. AND CONVOYS UNDER TOTAL ARMY
CONTROL. ISSUE IS BOTH PSYCHOLOGICAL ONE OF WHICH SIDE
DOMINATES SUPPLY AND PRACTICAL ONE OF RIGHT TO KNOW CONTENTS
OF TRUCKS.) RESULT WAS A FAST SHOOT OUT, WITH CONVOY BEING
TAKEN TO SABRA CAMP AND AT LEAST TWO SOLDIERS WOUNDED.
THE ARMY COMMAND DELIVERED AN ULTIMATUM TO 'ARAFAT TO
RELEASE THE MEN AND VEHICLES. THIS WAS DONE, BUT ARMS
AND POSSIBLY SOME VEHICLES WERE KEPT. WE UNDERSTAND
THAT THE ARMY DOES NOT YET CONSIDER MATTER CLOSED AND STILL
WANTS EQUIPMENT BACK.

3. ANOTHER DEVELOPMENT ON FIGHTING FRONT IS BOUND TO CAUSE
CONSTERNATION AMONG PHALANGISTS. THE NIGHT OF JAN 11-12, IN
A TWO-PRONGED MOVEMENT, PALESTINIANS FROM QUARANTINA AND
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NABAA TOOK CONTROL OF TWO MAIN BRIDGES OVER THE BEIRUT
RIVER NEAR QUARANTINA AND SEEM TO BE FIRMLY ENTRENCHED.
HOWEVER, PHALANGISTS ARE SAID TO BE HOLDING THEIR OWN IN
OTHER SECTIONS OF THE TEL ZAATAR FRONT.

4. ELSEWHERE IN BEIRUT, AXIS RUNNING FROM COMMERCIAL
CENTER SOUTH TO CHIAH SAW VERY HEAVY EXCHANGES, ESPECIALLY
NASRA-SODECO AND WADI ABOU JAMIL WHICH IS NOW PRACTICALLY

DESERTED EXCEPT FOR GUNMEN. MORTAR SHELLS ALSO FELL IN TARIQ JADIDE AND CORNICHE MAZRAA. BOTH SATURDAY AND SUNDAY NIGHTS, SKIES IN SOUTH BEIRUT AND SUBURBS WERE LIT BY STAR SHELLS, TRACERS AND ROCKETS. HEAVY EXPLOSIONS WERE CONSTANT, WITH ACTION CENTERING AROUND THE DAMASUCS ROAD.

5. THE BATTLE IN HOTEL DISTRICT HAS NOT LET UP, WITH ALL USUAL HEAVY WEAPONS BEING USED. EXCHANGES OF FIRE ARE PLAINLY AUDIBOEE IN EMBASSY. MORNING JAN 12, THERE WAS A DUEL BETWEEN EMBASSY ARMY DETACHMENT AND SNIPERS WHO HAD PINNED DOWN TWO MEN IN A CAR NEXT TO THE EMBASSY. AN ARMORED VEHICLE FINALLY RRESCUED THE MEN. THE TARGET GONE, THE SHOOTING STOPED.

6. NORTH OF BEIRUT, BETWEEN ANTELIAAS AND JOUNIEH, PHALANGISTS HAVE BESIEGED PALESTINIAN CAMP OF DBAYE ON COAST. THIS IS SAID TO BE IN RETALIATION FOR PPS ATTACK WHICH KILLED THREE CHRISTIANS, IN NEARBY TOWN. FIGHTING HAS ALSO MOVED INTO UPPER METN NEAR FALOUGHA, AND INTO CHOUF. IN LATTER CASE, SUNNIS REPORTEDLY ATTACKED CHRISTIAN TOWN OF JIYE NEAR DAMOUR. CHAMOUN AND JUMBLATT ARE ATTEMPTING TO COOL DOWN THE SITUATION THERE IN THEIR HOME TURF.

7 ZAHLE IS REPORTED TENSE AFTER A DAY OF HEAVY SHELLING, AND TRIPOLI-ZGHORTA HAVE BEEN BLASTING AWAY FOR TWO DAYS STRAIGHT. AND AS IF THAT WEREN'T ENOUGH, AN ANTI-CHRISTIAN CAMPAIGN IS SAID TO BE WARMING UP IN THE AKKAR IN NORTH LEBANON.

8. BOTH BECAUSE OF THE INTENSE FIGHTING AND THE FACT THAT TODAY IS A SHIITE HOLIDAY, ECONOMIC AND COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY THROUGHOUT BEIRUT IS VERY LIGHT INCLUDING THE NORMALLY ACTIVE HAMRA

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AREA. AIRPORT IS OPERATING, BUT THERE IS LITTLE TRAFFIC ON AIRPORT ROAD AND MOST PASSENGERS ARE ONLY TRANSITTING BEIRUT. FRENCH-LANGUAGE NEWSPAPER "L'ORIENT" CARRIED ARTICLE OVER WEEKEND THAT MEA PASSENGER TRAFFIC HAS DECREASED 55 PERCENT SINCE BEGINNING OF LEBANESE CRISIS NINE MONTHS AGO, AND THAT MEA IS LOSING FIVE MILLION POUNDS A MONTH; MEA REFUSED TO COMMENT IN ABSENCE OF BOTH PRESIDENT AND GENERAL MANAGER. "L'ORIENT" ALSO REPORTS THAT THE DUTCH GOVT HAS GIVEN LEBANON \$100,000 THROUGH THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS. PUBLIC APPEALS ARE BEING MADE FOR BLOOD DONATIONS AND FOR PERSONS TO CLEAN UP AND BURN THE GARBAGE IN THEIR NEIGHBORHOODS.

9. AS THE SECURITY AND POLITICAL SITUATION CONTINUES TO SLIDE DOWNHILL, MANY LEBANESE OBSERVERS PIN GREAT HOPES

ON THE PROJECTED MEETING OF PRESIDENT FRANGIE AND SYRIAN PRESIDENT ASAD. IF MEETING OCCURS, BELIEF HERE IS IT WILL PRECEDE ANY FOUR-PARTY SUMMIT OF THE TYPE BEING SUGGESTED BY SAUDI KING KHALED. SELIM EL-KHOURY, SON OF BOUTROS EL-KHOURY WHO WAS ONE OF THE RECENT INTERMEDIARIES FOR THE MEETING, TOLD EMBOFF JAN 10 THAT THE FRANGIE-ASAD MEETING WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY TAKE PLACE IN A MATTER OF DAYS, PROBABLY IN DAMASCUS. HE WAS UPBEAT ABOUT THE RESULT. PRESIDENTIAL ADVISOR LUCIEN DAHDAH SAID THE SAME IN A CONVERSATION JAN 12 WITH ECON COUNSELOR. WE ALSO UNDERSTAND THAT SPEAKER KAMAL AL-ASSAD OF THE LEBANESE PARLIAMENT RETURNED FROM HIS JAN 10 TRIP TO DAMASCUS VERY OPTIMISTIC. HE HAD SEEN PRESIDENT HAFEZ ASAD, FONMIN KHADDAM, AND CHIEF OF STAFF SHIHABI. REPORTEDLY, KHADDAM REITERATED PRIVATELY TO SPEAKER AL-ASSAD HIS RECENT PUBLIC WARNING AGAINST PARTITION OF LEBANON AND CRITICIZED THE ACTIVITIES OF CAMILLE CHAMOUN. PRESIDENT ASAD INDICATED TO THE SPEAKER THAT SYRIA WOULD TRY TO REIN IN THE LEFTIST SIDE IF THE NEGOTIATIONS PROCEEDED FAVORABLY.

10. THE LATEST IN THE SERIES OF LEBANESE PILGRIMAGES TO DAMASCUS IS THAT OF A GROUP OF LEFTISTS INCLUDING ABBAS KHALAF OF JUMBLATT'S PARTY, NASSERIST IBRAHIM QULAYLAT, LEBANESE COMMUNITY PARTY LEADER GEORGE HAWI, AND LEBANESE PRO-SYRIAN BAATH LEADER ASSAM KANSO. THEY DEPARTED BEIRUT JAN 11 AND ARE STILL IN SYRIA. THESE INDICATIONS OF
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CONTINUED SYRIAN EFFORTS TO END THE STRIFE ARE ALMOST THE SOLE REED WHICH THE LEBANESE CAN GRASP IN THE CURRENT IMPASSE. THOUGH SOME BELIEVE THE MOST ONE CAN HOPE FOR IS A TEMPORARY ARMISTICE, OTHERS APPEAR TO PLACE ALMOST KESPERATE FAITH IN THE OUTCOME OF THESE COMINGS AND GOINGS.
GODLEY

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